

# International Summit on Industrial Engineering

December 08-10, 2014 DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel San Francisco Airport, USA

## Designing the innovative workplace: Embracing uncertainty for profit and engagement

**Robert W Stuthridge**

Irish Ergonomics Society, Ireland

The traditional desk-based design of work in many organizations, even those that outwardly claim to embrace the principles of ergonomics reflects a design paradigm in which workers are constrained by organizational factors rather than human factors, stifling workers' potential for innovation and productivity. The traditional approach to workplace design reflects an organizational fear of uncertainty. This workplace is a product of the desire of its owners to control and direct human activity to achieve a predefined goal; it is essentially a command-and-control work system, in which uncertainty is a form of future threat to be negated by the application of tighter controls, more rigorous planning, micro-management, and by increasing centralization of decision-making and power. Such an approach is inefficient and unrewarding, both for the employee and for the employer. Uncertainty is, however, a significant component of profit, and it has long been argued that there are economic advantages for organizations that embrace, rather than resist uncertainty. In the uncertainty-embracing workplace, people may express their potential for working in a more co-operative manner with more fluid social engagement, resulting in greater problem solving, peer-to-peer encouragement, teaching, learning, ingenuity, and innovation. Based on recent collaboration between professionals in workplace design, management consulting and human factors, this presentation advocates a design approach that facilitates the embracing of uncertainty, thereby releasing the innovation and profit potential of all employees.

### Biography

Robert W Stuthridge earned his MSc in health ergonomics from the University of Surrey, and his PhD in human factors engineering from Purdue University. Formerly the Managing Director of an office furniture company in the UK, he has been directly involved in workplace design since 1985. Between 1995-2005, he advised the UK's Department for Work and Pensions and Environment Agency on inclusive design and after relocating to USA in 2005 he similarly advised the Department for Health and Human Services, Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Labor. He is a Certified Professional Ergonomist and Member of the Irish Ergonomics Society, he consults, teaches and writes on applied human factors in workplace design.

[robstuthridge@hotmail.com](mailto:robstuthridge@hotmail.com)